Increase in Import Duty on Coal

1093. SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that about 64 mines in the Eastern Coalfields are proposed to be closed;

(b) whether the Eastern Coalfields and some other companies are not able to compete with the imported Indonesian coal;

(c) whether the Indonesian coal has the advantage of very low wages in Indonesia itself; and

(d) if so, whether Government will enhance the import tariff on imported coal?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI DILIP RAY): (a) The Board of Directors of Eastern Coalfieds Limited (ECL) recommended closure of 64 mines in six areas of the company.

(b) Coal imported from Indonesia, Australia, South Africa and China are more competitively priced than Indian coal at certain locations in this country.

(c) No information about the wages of coal labour in Indonesia is available with the Ministry of Coal.

(d) No, Sir.

Supply of military equipment by Isreal Government

1094. SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the U.S. Government is putting pressure on Israel Government not to sell or supply military equipment to India;

(b) if so, the details in this regard; and

(c) whether Government have taken up this issue with the U.S. Government during Indo-U.S. talks; if so, the results thereof?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Government is not aware of the US Government putting pressure on Israel not to sell or supply military equipment to India.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Proposals with regard to controlling of nuclear weapons

1095. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is fact that the three services Army, Navy and Air Force have made certain proposals with regard to the controlling of the nuclear weapons;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the reaction of Government with regard thereto?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) India's nuclear deterrent is predicated on the basic principle of strict political/ civilian control. Such control would be exercised through appropriate scientific, technological and military management of the nuclear assets of the country to prevent unauthorised or accidental use. The Government of India is involved in the process of refining the command and control structure that will enable strict political control over a credible and effective deterrent against the use or the threat of use of weapons of mass destruction against India. The advice of the armed forces is one of the many inputs in this continuing exercise.

Action against guilty officials

1096. SHRI LAJPAT RAI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether in a case of short supply in MES stores, Jabalpur in 1989-90 and 1990-91, some officials were found guilty;

(b) whether it is also a fact that no action has been taken against any official;

(c) if not, the details of the enquiry held and action taken.

(d) whether the officers who held enquiry were the competent authority; and

(e) if not, the reasons for not taking action against the persons?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) A Departmental Court of Inquiry was ordered. Six Government officials were found responsible for the lapses. Disciplinary cases against two subordinate officials were finalised and penalties awarded. Further another was issued recordable warning while another was reprimanded. In the case of remaining two officials inquiry proceedings are in progress.

(d) and (e) Do not arise in view of (b) and (c)

Raising of retirement age of Armed Forces personnel

1097. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any survey or opinion poll has been made amongst Armed Forces personnel with regard to raising of retirement age whereby over 9-lakh Army jawans have indicated their option for going without at two year service extension; and

(b) if so, what decisions have been taken by Government in the light thereof, including that in respect of Army Medical Corps?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Strengthening of defence system

1098. SHRI SATISHCHANDRA SITARAM PRADHAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken fresh initiatives to strengthen defence system through upgradation of technology/joint ventures/import of latest equipment/systems from friendly countries like Russia and France;

(b) if so, the details of the proposals finalised/under consideration and financial implications thereof; and

(c) details of plans formulated and strategies worked out to make defence wings self-reliant and modern for the current year and Ninth Plan period?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) Strengthening the defence preparedness of the country is an on-going process involving the optimal utilisation of the human and material resources of the armed forces, defence research and development, indigenisation and self-reliance and defence cooperation with friendly countries. This is carried out within the allocated budgetary funds for the Ministry of Defence.

(c) The ten-year national mission for enhancing self-reliance in defence systems has been launched in 1995 to increase the indigenous content in annual defence acquisitions from 30% to 70%. This objective is projected to be achieved by the year 2005.

Crash of fighter planes

1099. SHRI RAJNATH SINGH 'SURYA' Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of fighter planes crashed during the last five years, category-wise;

(b) whether any study has been done to know the reasons therefor; and